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Milwaukee Guild of the Catholic Medical Association

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Checklist for Catholic Hospitals

Milwaukee Guild of the Catholic Medical Association

The Milwaukee Guild of the Catholic Medical Association began reorganization in December, 2003. At a meeting in May, 2004, with the Most Reverend Timothy M. Dolan, Archbishop of Milwaukee, members of the guild, both clergy and lay medical professionals, discussed their concerns of the importance of the Catholic identity of health care institutions, specifically Catholic hospitals. It is common knowledge that in some Catholic hospitals procedures are done that may not be in accord with the teachings of the Catholic Church. It was noted that organizations offering secular accreditation rely on checklists to assess compliance with professional practice standards. It was suggested that a "checklist" be devised that could be used by hospitals and diocesan officials to pinpoint specific actions that would foster the Catholic identity of hospitals, and the vocation of medicine in service to patients. Living the Gospel of Life in our secular culture of death is difficult. It is with God's grace and the help of each other that we will be able to apply the principles of our faith to the practice of medicine individually and collectively within Catholic health care institutions. We hope that this humble attempt in the spirit of charity will be of service to clergy, patients, practitioners, and administrators.

We assent to the teachings of the Magisterium of the Catholic Church on health care and ethics and are grateful for the many writings that explain and exhort us to follow those teachings. We wholeheartedly accept the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops document, "The Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services." We are grateful to organizations faithful to the Magisterium such as the Catholic Medical Association (CMA) and its efforts to address the crises facing health care ("Reports of the Task Forces on Health Care in America, Issues of Conscience and Ethical and Religious Directives," *Linacre Quarterly*, May 2005, Vol. 72, No.2). We recognize other organizations sincerely committed to fostering Catholic ethics in health care, such as the National Catholic Bioethics Center (Catholic Health Care Ethics – A Manual for Ethics Committees, 2001). Our goal in this document is not to reiterate in lengthy fashion what has already been stated but to give some practical suggestions from our perspective primarily as practicing physicians.

Physicians do have a unique role given the patient-doctor relationship. Because of our necessary direction and hands-on care of patients, we are approached by those (patients, staff, family members, and prospective

patients) who want to follow their faith in their medical care as well as those who are perplexed or even angered by the Church's teachings. We hope that by fostering the Catholic identity of institutions that ongoing conversion of heart, education of the intellect and consolation in the face of difficulties that illness brings will bring the peace of Christ amidst suffering. We seek to fulfill our mission as members of the CMA "to grow in the spirit of Christ in our personal and professional lives, to bring His Spirit to all that is touched by our science and art, and to assist the Vicar of Christ, the Bishops, and the whole Christian community with leadership, especially with the particular knowledge, skill, and experience we have as Christian physicians.

"Life" and "Love" summarize the mission of Catholic health care. In *Evangelium Vitae*, Pope John Paul II stated, "A unique responsibility belongs to health care personnel: doctors, pharmacists, man and woman religious, administrators and volunteers, Their profession calls for them to be guardians and servants of human life."

In an address to the 17th International Conference on the Identity of the Catholic Health Care Institutions, Pope John Paul II stated, "To understand the identity of such health care institutions fully, one must go to the heart of what the Church is, whose supreme law is love. Catholic health care institutions thus become powerful witnesses to the charity of the Good Samaritan because, in caring for the sick, we fulfill the Lord's will and contribute to realizing the Kingdom of God. In this way they express their true ecclesial identity." *Evangelium Vitae*, n. 88, states, "These (hospitals, clinics and convalescent homes) should not merely be places where care is provided for the sick or the dying. Above all, they should be places where suffering, pain and death are acknowledged and understood in their human and specifically Christian meaning."

Health care institutions then are not merely facilities for healing of the body or mind, they are by their very nature as Catholic institutions "carrying out the work of evangelization" (*Dolentium Hominum* n.1) following the mandate of Christ "to proclaim the Kingdom of God and heal the sick." (Luke 9:6)

The checklist that follows is an effort to positively reinforce the beauty of the teachings of the Church in a practical, pastoral way.

Checklist for Catholic Hospitals
Milwaukee Guild of the CMA, 6/1/04
(Revised 10/12/04, 6/13/05, 7/16/05)

Catholic hospitals should follow all standards of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishop's *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services* (ERDs).

Catholic hospitals do not perform, provide, or refer for:

1. Abortion
2. Sterilization
3. Contraception
4. Stem cell retrieval, research, human cloning involving production or destruction of human embryos.
5. In vitro fertilization or any other fertility treatments involving violation of Catholic teaching (e.g., masturbation).
6. Recognizing the legitimacy of protection from pregnancy in the case of rape, "emergency contraception" insofar as the planned medical intervention may be a post-coital early abortifacient involving wastage of the preimplantation human being ("fertilized ovum", "zygote", "pre-embryo", "embryo") it should not be practiced.
7. Suicide or euthanasia.
8. Withholding food or hydration from any person, e.g., persons in sustained comas, those with varying levels of consciousness or any other neurological or other impairment, handicap or disability (exception: a person in the immediate process of dying and/or who is unable to assimilate nutrition).

Catholic hospitals do practice and support:

1. Ethical standards regarding privacy, research, and patient care.
2. Health care for the poor and justice in fee structure for under/non-insured patients.
3. Fertility/Infertility programs that follow Catholic teaching.
4. Outreach to youth in support of chastity programs/Affiliation with pregnancy help centers as they may lend more credibility as alternatives to Planned Parenthood-type clinics/Encourage parental involvement in treatment of minors related to sexual health.
5. Natural Family Planning programs for patients and staff education.
6. Involvement with chaplaincy programs by Catholic priests who are free to offer and provide the sacraments. While extraordinary ministers may bring the Blessed Sacrament, only priests may hear confessions, celebrate Mass, and provide the sacrament of the sick. *Include priest volunteers willing to minister to the sick.*
7. Ethics committees that abide by and follow the ERDs.
8. Education in advance directives and advantages of health care power of attorney properly understood in light of Church teaching vs. living wills.
9. Organ donation once death has occurred that is consistent with Catholic teachings.

10. Health care insurance coverage of plans that do not cover contraception, abortion, or other practices such as certain reproductive technologies contrary to the teaching of the Magisterium.

11. Hospice programs that follow ERDs.

12. Parish Nursing Programs that follow ERDs. Support of their unique role in continuation of Catholic health care in the home setting and providing services such as NFP and chastity education not routinely offered in secular settings; identification of those needing assistance in obtaining sacraments.

Catholic Environment:

1. Daily Mass celebrated and announced; regular Mass and confession schedules posted and advertised.

2. Adoration chapel available, preferably 24 hours a day.

3. Prayerful atmosphere welcomed and encouraged in the Catholic tradition, e.g., start of meetings, beginning of shift, with patients if they are agreeable.

4. Catholic reading materials, sacramentals, and gifts available.

5. Catholic programs on TV (e.g. EWTN) and radio (e.g. EWTN, Relevant Radio) and in-house hospital Catholic announcements.

6. Crucifixes in patient rooms (Patients' requests for removal should be honored.)

7. Family friendly and supportive environments.

Personnel Issues:

1. CEOs and ethics committee members should have a mandatum from Archbishop.

2. Physician credentialing to conform to the ERDs.

3. Efforts to hire Catholic professional nurses and other health care professionals/workers who are faithful to the Magisterial teachings. Hiring of employees on a non-discriminatory basis who are willing to sign a statement that they will follow the ERDs and Catholic mission of the institution at the very least during their time on the job.

4. Provide/ require ongoing formation of employees and staff on the Catholic mission in health care, ERDs, and current medical and scientific topics in ethics.

5. Collaboration and/or support for Catholic Medical Association guild meetings and events, e.g.: speakers, programs, site, formation for staff/ personnel. Avoid support for public events and professional conferences in which the teachings contrary to the Church are most likely to be presented and give scandal.

Summary Statement

We, the members of the Milwaukee Guild of the Catholic Medical Association are most grateful to our Archbishop, The Most Reverend Timothy M. Dolan, for listening to our concerns and ideas for fostering the Catholic identity of Catholic health care institutions. We hope that this checklist will be helpful to physicians, health care professionals, administrators, and all health care workers in their service to patients within the Catholic health care setting. We entrust this mission to the Blessed Trinity, the Father, the Son who is the Divine Physician, and the Holy Spirit through the intercession of the Mother of God with the help of the patron saints of the medical profession: St. Luke, Sts. Cosmos and Damien, and St. Raphael.
